

Facing globalisation

As the craze of globalisation rages on, our problems are only globalised, while there are no globalised solutions. We may go round and round the globe, like a merry-go-round, reaching nowhere. Simply there is no way. No emancipation from globalisation.

BINOY BARMAN

GLOBALISATION has gobbled the whole world. There is virtually no part on earth which has not been hit and bit by the enormous fangs of the monster. All aspects of life have come under the sinister impact of globalisation, growing and dwelling in the shadow of capitalism. It dazzles like the sun and blinds normal vision. With its apparent grandeur, it ensnares people, though it is hollow in its core. I doubt globalisation will lead us to a better future, bringing well-being for the common folks.

I was thinking of the globalised perils while listening to Professor Dr. Fakrul Alam on "Postcolonialism in the age of globalisation" at AIUB on March 17. In fact, the word "globalisation," a buzzword nowadays, attracted me to what the organisers called "interactive colloquium."

Professor Alam talked eloquently on postcolonial literature and its background and development, clearly delineating its connection with present-day world order. Literature has assumed new dimension in recent decades in the

face of globalisation, focussing on issues like diaspora, hybridity and cosmopolitan culture.

He said that globalisation was ushering in a system of "internationalism," dismantling the barriers of narrow nationalism. So the dream of a "world without borders" hovers over the horizon. It holds a promise for many, like revered Professor Alam. But to me, the promise is empty.

Globalisation has brought more hazards than comforts. A mechanical and materialistic view of life has been imported and incorporated, through the vehicle of globalisation, into oriental space hitherto basking in the complacency of idealism. It has gnawed at the ethical base of this region. It has been a great loss for humanity, I should say, a colossal moral defeat.

Globalisation preaches the philosophy of hedonism. Consumer goods are spread around and a mantra is whispered: "Consume, consume and consume. You have no work other than consumption!" Thus, globalisation has made the human soul spiritually sick, morally bankrupt and intellectually pretentious.

Globalisation has posed a genuine threat to indigenous culture and language across the globe. The dominant culture is out there to suppress the meek and mild. The affected, with the loss of their culture and language, fall into a vacuum, suffering from an identity crisis.

They become alienated from and in themselves. Some may take it as a harmless outcome of the spontaneous interaction between multifarious cultural and linguistic elements while others may see it as the consequence of cultural and linguistic imperialism or aggression.

Globalisation has taught the world corporate trickery. The West is the breeding ground of big corporate scandals. Corporate culture seeks to influence the government machinery through fraudulence and corruption for the interest of the vested quarters, the bourgeoisie. It promotes the motto of maximising profit, by fair means or foul. It suggests a heartless handling of business affairs, where human life carries no value.

Life becomes a mere commodity. Money stands at the centre of all activities. Everybody runs after money when money itself is not stationary. It flows to the people who have already got enough. It is not meant for the penniless. Globalisation is for the gentlemen; there is no hope for the subaltern, the marginalised.

Globalisation has globalised terrorism, in a literal sense. The root of terrorism does not lie in the soil of the East but of the West. The capitalist West used the gullible oriental people to implement its

heinous political design. It gave arms to fundamentalists and set them to combat the forces of the proletariat.

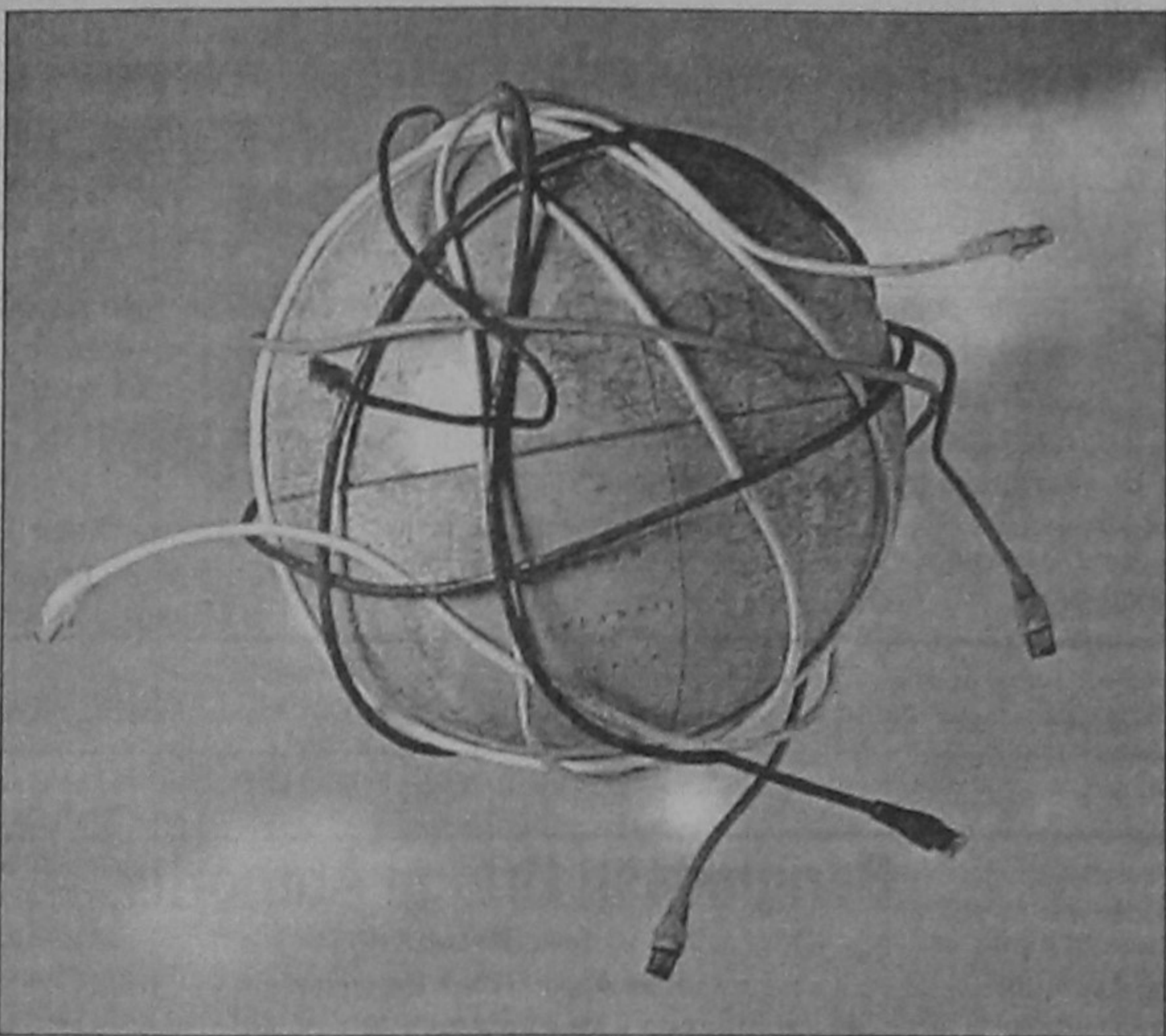
Unfortunately, the gun is now directed back to the provocative West, hence the fundamentalists have been given the epithet "terrorists." It is the West that is completely responsible for the development and spread of what we call "terrorism."

Globalisation has done no good to the poor. It has made farmers dependent on genetically modified seeds produced by the technologically advanced nations. It has dragged workers from one geographical location to another, often dumping them in more repressive working environments. The labourers only change zones, without much uplift in status.

This "dislocated labour" serves the rich, the manufacturers, the giant corporations. In the process, slave remains slave and master remains master. Globalisation turns daily necessities dearer, almost out of the reach of the poor. And, if anybody has to die from hunger in the days of soaring prices, it is the poor peasants and workers, the downtrodden, first.

At the state level, globalisation only feeds the economy of rich nations. The industrialised countries sell their "unsellable" products to the hungry population of the underdeveloped or developing countries and earn undue profit. The balance of trade is tilted, without any exception, towards the heavyweights.

The so-called least developed countries have no chance to score high in the free field of free market. The ball is always in the court



Held in bondage by globalisation.

of skilled players. Even the legislations of WTO cannot guarantee the interests of poor citizens of the world. Alas! Adam Smith, what damage have you caused to humanity with your Wealth of the Nations, paving the way for laissez-faire!

As the craze of globalisation rages on, our problems are only globalised, while there are no globalised solutions. We may go round and round the globe, like a merry-go-round, reaching nowhere.

Simply there is no way. No emancipation from globalisation. With this new realisation, I think, literature should play a more critical role, shunning all enthusiasm for it, in identifying and overcoming the problems of globalisation. That is the sole duty of literary philosophy in the age of globalisation.

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Education: Keeping up with population growth

Unless we realise the enormity of the impact of this population growth and adopt appropriate measures for the education sector, it will result in worsening of the quality and capacity of the nation's education system.

HALIMUR R. KHAN

WE'RE happy to learn that Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid wants to place a new education policy within 3 months. One issue, that needs to be considered before recommendations can be made, is the growth of the population and its implications on the policy to be formulated. Below, we offer some of our observations.

From 148 million people in 2005, the population of Bangladesh will grow to 192.9 million in just 20 years! This population explosion will impact almost all aspects of life, and most importantly on the education system. Especially affected will be the capacity of the current education system to absorb students at the college, graduate and post-graduate levels, and the need for new teachers.

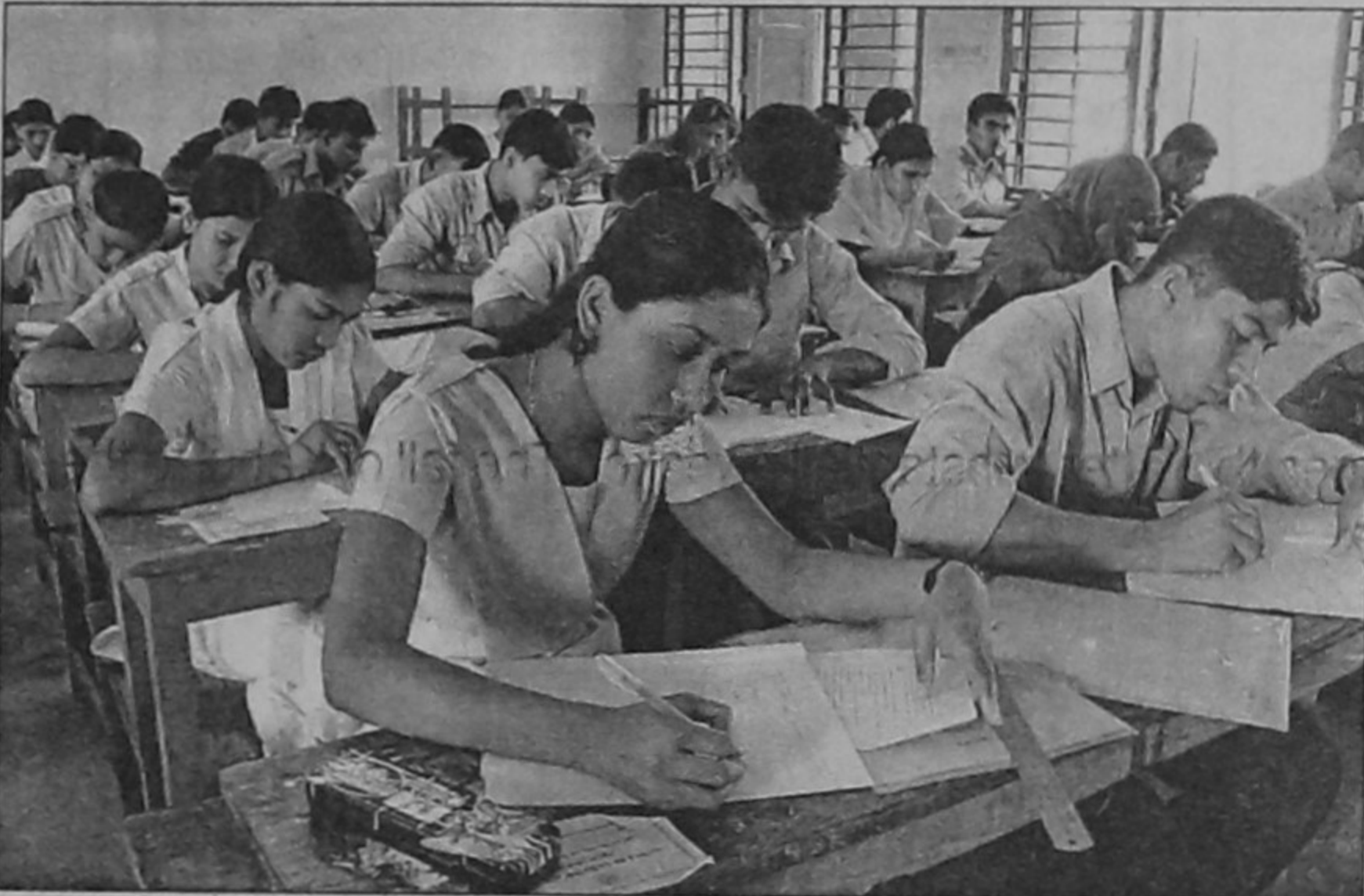
Unless we realise the enormity of the impact of this population growth and adopt appropriate measures for the

education sector, it will result in worsening of the quality and capacity of the nation's education system.

The table shows the population of various school-going ages in 2005 and 2025 with total population. The numbers (1-9) in the top row represent the following categories of data:

(1) Percentage of children actually attended school  
(2) Number of children attended school  
(3) Number of institutions/physical buildings that existed  
(4) Number of teachers served  
(5) Number of students expected to attend  
(6) Number of institutions needed to accommodate  
(7) Number of additional buildings/institutions needed  
(8) Number of teachers needed  
(9) Number of additional teachers needed.

Based on the table, the first major



More students will mean providing more facilities.

change that is projected between the years 2005-2025, taking the current rate of attendance as constant, is the growth of school and college going population by 5.4 million (8.8%). These numbers suggest that a major capacity building effort in the education system will have to be undertaken if the nation wants to keep educating its children even at the current rate of attendance.

This assessment does not take into account issues such as improving quality of

education, developing relevant curriculum, etc.; instead, it takes into account only:

- Physical infrastructure, and
- Teachers.

In 2005, 18.2 million children were age-appropriate for primary school, 90% (16.2 m) attended; 80,397 schools and 344,789 teachers served the educational needs of this population. 17 million students between ages 10-14; 44% (7.4 m) attended; there were 18,000 schools and 232,929 teachers.

Approximately 1.3 million students (10% of 13 m) attended college at 3,150 colleges where 90,401 teachers taught. And a very small percentage, (1.6% of 13 million) university going-age students attended 74 higher educational institutions/ universities served by 10,339 professors and instructors.

Because of the falling birth rate, almost 7,445 primary and 500 secondary schools will not be needed in 2025. Most of the population growth, however, will take place in the college and university levels, with the largest capacity-building needs projected in

the area of higher education.

Almost 300,000 more students will attend college in 2025, requiring an additional 733 colleges and 21,353 teachers. And, nearly 68,000 more students will want to attend university in 2025. This will require building of 24 universities at the current rate of students per university, and another 3,353 university professors and instructors at the current student-teacher ratio.

Given the growth of the university going population in the past decade, it is conceivable that predictions made based on the current rate of attendance (of school, college and university) will fall short of actual needs in 2025. If the growth of this population is any predictor, then capacity increase to accommodate this population has to be significantly large.

However, more significantly, since today's "knowledge economy" and "information society" will become more competitive by 2025, the completion of high-school, and even a university degree will become a "requirement" to get good jobs; this will drive the demand for higher education exponentially.

Aside from this, there is also an increasing awareness among the population that education is directly related to income. Let us, then, look at some hypothetical situations, taking into account this demand for education in the next two decades or so.

If 10-year schooling becomes mandatory, and 100% age-appropriate children attend primary and secondary school, Bangladesh will have to invest major resources for developing capacity to provide the educational needs of this group; an additional 697 primary schools and 22,250 secondary schools will have to be built and 282,814 new teachers added for these schools!

A massive capacity development drive will have to be undertaken if 100%, 50% or even 25% of the higher-secondary

school population decide that they will go to college. At 25% increase of attendance, 9,450 two-year colleges will have to be built and an additional 271,203 teachers trained; at 50%, the nation will require an additional 22,050 colleges and 632,807 new teachers; and, at 100%, an incredible 47,250 colleges and almost 1.3 million teachers will be needed.

Incredible as it may sound, the possibility of opening such a floodgate is not impossible. If the recent hike in demand for university education is any indicator, the government may as well take heed.

At the growth rate (1.6%) seen in 2005, an additional 24 universities (or, the development of similar capacity) will be necessary to serve the demand. And if this population decides to go in large numbers for higher education, it will become a major challenge for the government to accommodate their demands.

If 5% of Bangladesh's university-going population decide by 2025 that they need higher education, the country will need an additional 232 universities and 22,111 professors; if the nation decides to catch-up with India's level of higher education (at least, in numbers of students attending university), it will have to build 674 universities and find 84,113 professors.

And should Bangladesh decide to catch up with Malaysia and Thailand, it will have take on the daunting task of building an additional 1,704 and 2,194 universities respectively. Is Bangladesh prepared to move onto the 21st century? Looking at the data, it appears that the nation and its leadership have a lot of work to do to get anywhere close to even our neighbours, let alone the developing nations.

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Divine humans are back in fashion



FROM now on, I will only accept emails beginning with the following words: "Our columnist, who art in Hong Kong, hallowed be your column."

And all letters to me should all end with the word "amen" instead of the more common "yours sincerely" or "die, scum."

Why is this? Because I have noticed that divinity is coming back into fashion.

Villagers in Jharkhand, India, have been praying to Barack Obama, for example. "Only honest parliamentarians like Obama can change the fate of the country," villager Sainen Sen, 71, told reporters

as he folded his hands to pray. The villagers also sang sacred hymns to the US president.

This is a brilliant idea. Anyone who has tried to get an interview with Obama knows that he has massed armies of secretaries and flunkies who intercept every call and letter and email. Their view is that His Coolness must not be disturbed.

But prayers? They fly right through all the defences, whizzing across the world (no postage necessary) and fly through the White House windows.

Does Obama actually reply to these prayers? I'm told that believers do get personal visions of The Obamatron solving their problems, but only if they drink a lot of sacred wine.

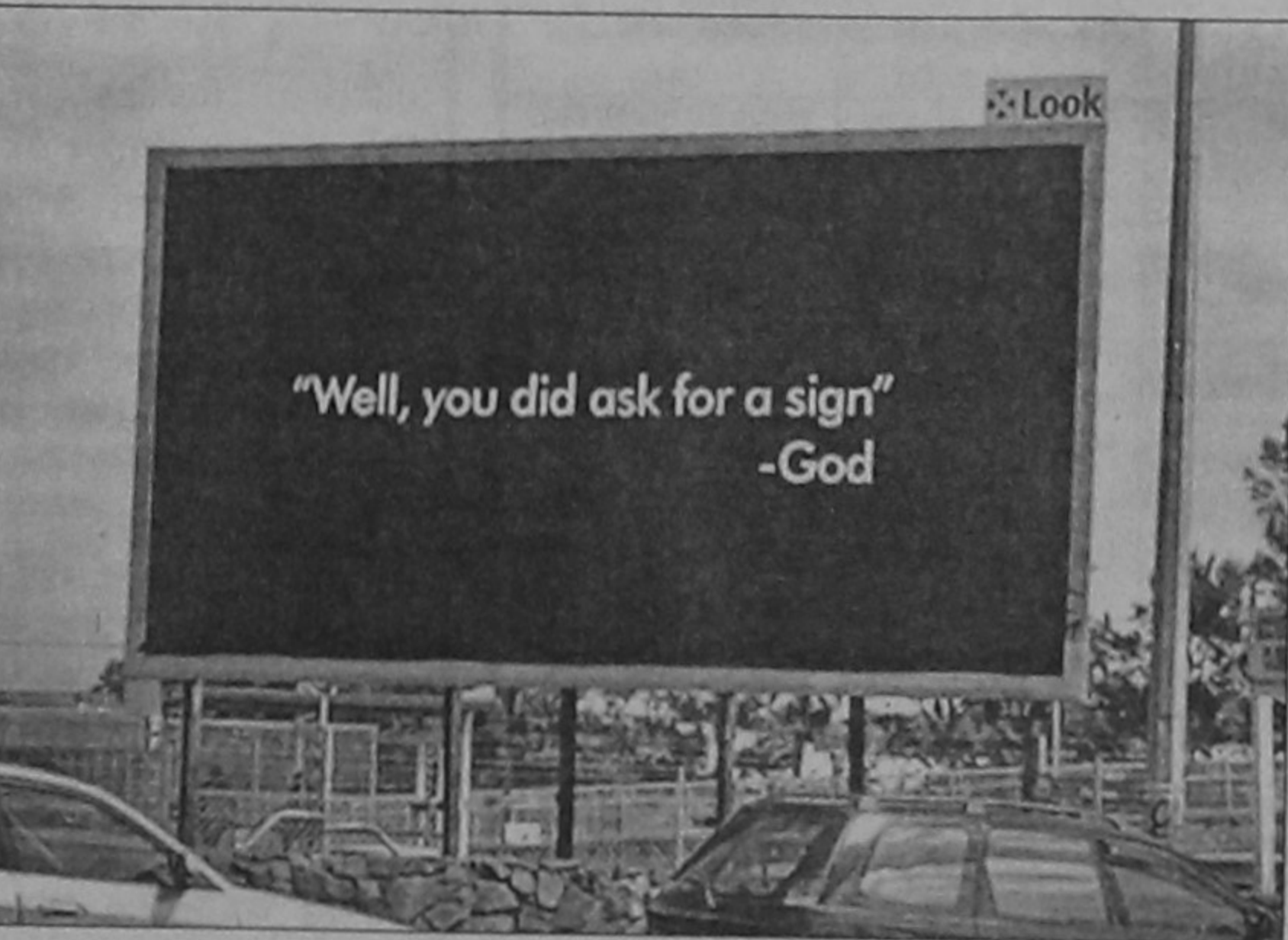
No member of my immediate family has achieved the status of a deity (unless you count my wife, whose every word must be obeyed), but one of my father's buddies has. My dad knew Mohandas K. Gandhi as a good-hearted, insightful guy.

But Gandhi now has his own temple, at Bhatra in Orissa, India, with a statue of him at its heart.

The head priest reads out the great man's teachings every morning and evening. Now that's what I call an over-achiever.

Incidentally, I suggest that godhood be stripped from Chuck Norris, the US actor. Mr. Norris's fans famously created a list of "Chuck Norris facts," which are one-liners which show their admiration for him.

1. When Chuck Norris does pushups, he doesn't lift himself up. He pushes the world down.
2. Chuck Norris counted to infinity twice.
3. Chuck Norris went back in time to stop the JFK assassination. He deflected the bullets with his beard, but the president's head exploded out of sheer amazement.
4. If Chuck Norris is late, time better slow down.



Indian film fans read these and were inspired by them (that is, they copied them) as The Rajnikanth Facts, referring

to India's own top action hero. I was shocked to hear that Norris had taken out a lawsuit against his fans,

claiming that lines such as those above are not factually accurate. This means that Mr. Norris will eventually end up in a courtroom using diagrams and scientific exports to show that the world doesn't actually go down when he does push-ups.

You'd have to have less intelligence than a one-celled protozoid to not realise that these are jokes. On the other hand, given the general record of decisions by US juries that may be over-estimating their intelligence.

Rumour has it that lawyers put him up to it. One assumes that during the trial, Mr. Norris will also have to try to count to infinity, twice. It should be a rather lengthy hearing. Clearly the lawyers are on a billable hours system.

This column is over. You may not go in peace.

Amen.

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